

"It's Time to Invest in Education, Not Just Talk about Education's Importance"

Congressman Charlie Wilson

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Previous generations invested in our education and now it is our turn to invest in our children and grandchildren. Federal, state and local governments must work together to improve our education system; but it starts at the top. That's why I'm so pleased that education is one of the top investment priorities for both Congress and President Obama. Some of the most significant legislative achievements this year, including the economic recovery plan and the long-term budget, have made energy, healthcare and education their primary focus. I believe the kind of unprecedented education investments and reforms we are working on will ensure that our children are the best-educated in the world. Investing in our children will help lay the groundwork for our long-term prosperity in today's global economy.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

I proudly voted in favor for the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act because it was designed to create jobs and to provide immediate relief to America's schools. Schools will see an increase in Title I and IDEA funds over two years to help low-income students and students with disabilities. Ohio's Sixth District received more than \$40 million in Title I and IDEA funding for its 64 local school districts.

Because of the Senate compromise on the Recovery Act, school construction funding was moved into a state stabilization fund; this money will be given out at the Governors' discretion. Ohio was allocated \$1.8 billion to help prevent education-related layoffs, and to help create new jobs by repairing, renovating and modernizing schools and colleges.

The 2010 Budget Resolution

The Budget is a blueprint that builds on the Recovery Act's historic investment in education. When implemented, the budget will increase funding, support early education and improve our schools' breakfast and lunch programs.

In order to be truly competitive, our education priorities can not stop after high-school. Our budget will also make college more affordable and accessible by continuing to raise the maximum Pell grant award in a fiscally responsible way, and will provide additional assistance so that more high school graduates from working families can attend and complete college.

Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act

One other creative way Congress and the President have worked to make college more affordable is by passing the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act. This legislation is good for communities and good for students trying to save for college. The new law provides the greatest expansion of national service since President John F. Kennedy first issued his call to serve over 50 years ago. It creates 175,000 new public service opportunities through Americorps.

As young people serve their communities, the legislation increases the education award that they will receive in exchange for their work to \$5,350. That is a significant amount of money for college. Older volunteers can also earn education awards which can be transferred - up to \$1,000 for at least 350 hours of service - to a child, foster child or grandchild.

Even middle and high school students are encouraged to take part through the new Summer of Service program which allows those students to earn a \$500 education award to be put toward college.

Time to Invest

Investing in education from early childhood through college ensures that we will have a competitive workforce that is prepared to maintain America's position as the world's innovative and economic leader.

I am proud to be part of a community that values education. The work being done at the state and local level, along with what we are doing in Washington, will ensure that our children are given every opportunity to succeed. I started this editorial with this idea, but it bears repeating: we all share the responsibility to invest in our children and grandchildren just as previous generations invested in us. I promise to do my part.